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ABSTRACT

The Tennessee Technological University Rural Education Research and Service Consortium (RERSC) was established in 1984 to facilitate research and service activities of the College of Education faculty in selected rural schools, to provide assistance to faculty desiring to engage in such research and service, and to launch a major research thrust consistent with provisions of the Comprehensive Education Reform Act of 1984 and the national emphasis on effective schools and effective teaching. RERSC was funded by the University and the College of Education, staffed by a half-time director and a fourth-time secretary, and governed by an 18-member board representing the university and member public schools. Seven area schools were selected to join RERSC on the basis of proximity to campus, dimension of ruralness, existing relationships with school officials, access to grade K-12 schools with supervising principals, and future access to small schools with teaching principals. A 4-year school effectiveness study of 100 area rural schools was planned. Eighteen research/service project proposals totaling $5,003 were accepted and funded. During the 1984-85 school year, 63 student teachers were placed in rural schools for pre-service teacher education field experiences. One-day workshops on ethnographic techniques in educational research and field-based research design were sponsored. (NEC)

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1984-85 Annual Report

1985

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RURAL EDUCATION PROJECT

1984-85 ANNUAL REPORT

I. Introduction

The TTU Rural Education Research and Service Consortium (RERSC) was established in 1984 to facilitate research and service activities of the College of Education faculty in selected rural schools, to provide assistance to faculty desiring to engage in such research and service, and to launch a major research thrust consistent with the provisions of the Comprehensive Education Reform Act of 1984 (CERA) and the national emphasis on effective schools and effective teaching. RERSC was funded by the University and by the College of Education. The goals of the RERSC are to:

1. Provide an organizational structure to facilitate and promote cooperative efforts among the constituent members.

2. Encourage research related to rural education and other rural issues.

3. Provide a forum for sharing and disseminating information related to rural education and other rural issues.

4. Facilitate and coordinate service activities in selected area schools.

5. Assist in the implementation of CERA and monitor its impact in selected area schools.

6. Provide staff development opportunities for College of Education faculty with an emphasis on research techniques, emerging issues in rural education and teaching/school effectiveness, and direct involvement in the public schools as required by CERA.

7. Facilitate rural education field experiences for pre- and inservice educators.

Beginning as a collection of ideas generated during a brainstorming session of the College of Education Executive Committee at the Craft Center in May of 1984, the RERSC began to evolve during the summer and early fall as work began on a formal proposal and selected schools were contacted. By the end of the Fall Quarter, the proposal was funded by the University, the Governance Board was in place and data collection was beginning. Faculty research/service proposals were accepted during the Winter Quarter and funded for the Spring Quarter. Each component of the project is moving forward.

II. Governing Board

The coordination of the research and service activities undertaken in the public schools is crucial to the success of the project. The interaction of public school educators, state department of education personnel and college faculty must occur within some recognized bounds to assure that efforts are coordinated, communication is accurate, and various components do not interfere with one another. The personnel in the public schools selected must have some voice in the policy making process.

To centralize the flow of information and the management of the project, an acting director was appointed during the Fall Quarter. In January, the acting director was named director and given half-time to serve in this capacity. A fourth-time secretary was named. The director and secretary are housed in Bartoo Hall with convenient access to the faculty of the College

of Education.

The RERSC Governance Board was appointed by the President during the Fall Quarter. The members of the Governance Board are:

TTU President, ex-officio
TTU Dean of the College of Education
TTU Coordinator of Educational Support Services
TTU Chairperson of Community of Rural Scholars
Tennessee Department of Education Director of Services for the Upper Cumberland District
York Institute Superintendent
York Institute Director of Instructional Services
White County Superintendent of Schools
White County Supervisor of Instruction
Findlay Elementary School Representative
White County Middle School Representative
White County High School Representative
Jackson County Superintendent of Schools
Jackson County Supervisor of Instruction
Gainesboro Elementary School Representative
Fox Elementary School Representative
Jackson County High School Representative
TTU Director of Rural Education, executive officer

The RERSC Governance Board will have met four times during the 1984-85 academic year. The first meeting was held November 30, 1984, in the Executive Dining Room and Lounge at TTU. The TTU President hosted the meeting. The York Institue Superintendent and the Jackson County Schools Superintendent were elected chairperson and vice-chairperson, respectively. The Rural Education Project was discussed in detail and the purposes and responsibilities of the Governance Board were clarified. Certificates of membership were distrituted and photographs made for news releases.

The second meeting was held January 31, 1985, in Gainesboro. The Jackson County Superintendent served as host. The meeting agenda focused on developing a process for reviewing and funding TTU faculty research/service project proposals. It was decided

that the Director of Rural Education would establish February 15 as the due date for proposals, would review each to determine if it was consistent with the RERSC goals, and forward acceptable proposals to the respresentatives of the schools involved by February 22. School representatives, principals, and faculty members would review each proposal and rate them as acceptable, acceptable with revision, or unacceptable. Acceptable proposals would then be ranked by the schools as to preference. Formal action on all proposals was to occur at the March meeting of the Governance Board.

On March 1, the Governance Board met at York Institute in Jamestown. The York Institute Superintendent (in absentia) and Director of Instructional Services hosted the meeting. The list of proposals accepted and ranked by each school was reviewed. The Director of Rural Education made recommendations regarding adjustments in funding requests that would bring the total to within the $5000 budgeted. The Governance Board accepted those recommendations and app oved 20 faculty research/service proposals.

The Governance Board will meet May 8 at White County Middle School in Sparta. The White County Superintendent of Schools will serve as host. The agenda will focus on an assessment of progress and problems of 1984-85, the status of the research/service projects underway, and the establishment of school improvement goals for each school for 1985-86. These goals will become the basis for faculty proposals to be submitted in early summer.

III. Selection of Member Schools

The selection of schools to actively participate in the Rural Education Project occurred during the Summer of 1984. Selection criteria included proximity to campus, dimension of ruralness, existing relationships with school officials, access to schools covering kindergarten through the twelfth grade in schools with supervising principals, and future access to small schools with teaching principals. Since the schools were selected in early summer for the project to begin in September, it was considered prudent to select school systems in which the superintendent was not running for re-election in August. The schools selected were Gainesboro Elementary (GES), Fox Elementary (Fox) and Jackson County High (JCHS) in Jackson County; Findlay Elementary (FES), White County Middle (WCMS) and White County High (WCHS) in White County; and Alvin C. York Agricultural Institute (YAI), a state special school located in Jamestown.

Jackson County meets all definitions of rural. According the the Beale Classification used by the U.S. Census Office, Jackson County is Category 9--Rural, not adjacent: counties not contiguous to a Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA) and having fewer than 2500 urban residents. According to the 1980 Census, Jackson County had 9398 rural residents and no urban residents. The population of Gainesboro was 1,119. Jackson County had a 1982-83 school enrollment of 1675 pupils, well under the 2500 pupil criterion for a rural school district. The three school selected include grades K-4, 5-8, and 9-12 and serve all students in the county except for those enrolled at Dodson Branch, a teaching principal school in the southeast portion of

the county. Each of the schools in Jackson County is within 30 minutes of the TTU campus.

White County is classified as Beale Category 7--Less urbanized, not adjacent: counties not contiguous to SMSAs and having 2500 to 19,999 urban residents. According to the 1980 Census, White County had 14,716 rural residents and 4851 urban residents. The population of Sparta was 4,864. The White County Schools enrolled a total of 3,989 pupils in 1982-83. The schools selected include grades K-6, 7-8, and 9-12. The K-6 school serves the northern portion of the county, the 7-8 school and the 9-12 school serve the entire county. In addition to the schools selected, there are four K-6 schools with teaching principals. Each of the selected schools is within 30 minutes of the TTU campus.

YAI is a state special schools serving the 9-12 school population in the northern portion of Fentress County. Fentress County is Category 9 having 14826 rural residents and no urban residents. Jamestown had a population of 2,364. In 1982-83, YAI had an enrollment of 708. The YAI feeder schools include three teaching principal K-8 schools. YAI is an hour and fifteen minutes from TTU; however, the uniqueness of the school, the work that the College of Education has already done at YAI, and the contractual relationship between TTU and YAI resulted in its selection for the project.

IV. Community of Rural Scholars

The Community of Rural Scholars is a teacher education faculty group that meets monthly for a dutch treat luncheon, an

update on the Rural Education Project, and one or more faculty presentations on research interests. The group evolved from of a series of informal luncheon meetings among interested faculty members. There are approximately 30 teacher education faculty who attend regularly. These faculty members represent all departments in the College of Education and teacher educators from the College of Agriculture and Home Economics. In addition, a representive from the Upper Cumberland Office of the Tennessee Department of Education and the adult literacy program director for Putnam County attend.

V. Faculty Staff Development

One goal of the Rural Education Project is to assist teacher education faculty in designing and implementing field-based research in the member schools. Since many of the faculty have engaged primarily in instruction and public service activities since coming to TTU, they need assistance in initiating research efforts. Also, the techniques of educational research have changed in the past few years with the availability of computer data banks and the greater acceptance of ethnographic techniques.

An ethnographer from the University of Georgia, Dr. Mary Jo McGee-Brown, was on campus March 27-28 to meet informally with interested faculty and to conduct a one-day workshop on ethnograhic techniques in educational research. Approximately 20 faculty members and representatives from member schools attended all or part of the workshop. The techniques presented are already being used in one research project and are being considered by other faculty planning future projects.

Dr. Donald Akenson, Professor of History at Queens

University in Kingsman, Ontorio, will speak on April 24 on "Research Opportunities in Rural History/Rural Education." Dr. Akenson is the editor of the Canadian Papers in Rural History and has published widely in the areas of rural community studies and the history of Irish Education.

On May 24, Dr. Carolyn Evertson of Vanderbilt University will conduct a one-day workshop on field-based research design. The faculty is currently generating a list of rural education research questions for Dr. Evertson to use in planning the workshop. Dr. Evertson is nationally known for her research in classroom management. She has already devoted a half-day to assisting two faculty members from TTU in research design and is enthusiastic about the potential of the project. She feels that the access to schools which we have is the key to significant research that will have meaning nationally.

Plans are being made to have one or more researchers from the Kappa Delta Pi 100 Good Schools Study on campus during the spring or fall. Other resource persons who have been contacted include a learning styles researcher.

There is no lack of faculty interest in learning more about field-based educational research techniques; the major problem is one of time--attempting to schedule consultants at a time when the faculty will be available.

VI. The 100 Rural Schools Project

Kappa Delta Pi granted permission for TTU to use the instruments and research design of their 100 Good Schools Project in a study of rural schools. The goal is to conduct a school

effectiveness study of 100 rural schools in the TTU service area during a four year period, to compare the characteristics of these rural schools with data from the Good Schools Project, and then compare the characteristics of those rural schools which are most effective. In addition to the data which were collected by Kappa Delta Pi, extensive achievement data matched to individual student attendance and socio-economic status are being collected. The data collection process is being field tested in the RERSC member schools. By June 1, data collection should be complete for each of the seven member schools, Allardt School in Fentress County, Cookeville High School in Putnam County, and DeKalb County Middle School in DeKalb County. Graduate students are being encouraged to conduct the study in their school for their master's problem paper or other graduate level independent study. A few principals in the area have expressed interest in the study being done in their schools in order that they might use the information for school improvement projects mandated by the Better Schools Program. Once the data collection and analysis process is routinized, the conduct of the study in schools should proceed in a timely fashion.

VI. CERA Impact Study

Longitudinal collection and comparison of the data described above (Section V) in member and non-member schools will provide information on the impact of CERA and TTU intervention on the effectiveness of the member schools and on the impact of CERA on the effectiveness of non-member schools. Comparisons of the two groups of schools will provide evidence of the effects of TTU intervention.

In addition to the school effectiveness studies, studies of individual teacher effectiveness are also being conducted. A comparison of the teaching behaviors of fifteen area teachers before and after involvement in a course in staff development is being conducted with a TTU Faculty Research Grant. The research procedures developed in that study will be used in comparing the teaching behaviors of approximately 40 volunteer teachers in the RERSC member schools at the beginning of the project and throughout the project. Each teacher has been video-taped teaching a lesson in his/her classroom during the Fall of 1984; a second taping of each teacher will be completed by June 1. The teaching behaviors on the two tapes will be compared on twelve dimensions of effective teaching drawn from the Tennessee Instructional Model and nationally validated research on effective teaching. Graduate assistants have been trained in the use of the instrument and critique the tapes in pairs to increase reliability. Volunteer teachers will continue to be taped, critiqued, and receive feedback throughout the project. Other assistance provided to teachers aspiring to Career Ladder II and III includes fall and spring use of Flanders Interaction Analysis in each teacher's classroom and individualized assistance in unit and lesson design consistent with the Tennessee Instructional Model and the Career Ladder criteria. As teaching dimension difficiencies are identified, staff development activities will be developed and provided to assist in teacher remediation.

VII. Rural Education Graduate Assistant

A graduate assistant was assigned to the Rural Education

Project in January of 1985. The graduate assistant has been trained in the use of video equipment, use of a 35mm camera, the teaching behavior critiquing procedure, and the 100 Rural Schools data collection process. This quarter he is doing all the video taping of the teachers in both research projects, driving a van for one of the faculty research grants, taking photographs to document projects in the schools, doing data collection for the 100 Rural Schools and CERA Impact studies, and providing miscellaneous support services for the faculty research/service projects.

VIII. Faculty Research/Service Projects

The call for teacher education faculty research/service project proposals was issued during the Winter Quarter. Twenty-one proposals were submitted. Each department in the College of Education, Agriculture, and Home Economics faculty submitted proposals. The total request for funding was approximately $8,000. Since only $5,000 had been budgeted for this component, a selection process was developed by the RERSC Governance Board. All proposals were reviewed by the Director of Rural Education and found to be consistent with the goals of the projects. Then each proposal was reviewed by the Governance Board representative from the schools selected by each proposal. Three proposals were ruled unacceptable and minor revision was requested on two proposals. Certain duplication costs and clerical support costs were deleted from the proposal budgets to yield a total cost of $5,003. The Governance Board formally accepted the eighteen proposals. The duplication and clerical support which were deleted from the proposals ares being provided through bulk

purchase of paper for the Learning Resources Center and through coordination of existing clerical personnel in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction and the Rural Education Office. A table showing the projects funded, the schools involved, and the budgeted costs is included in the appendix to this report.

The teacher education faculty are excited about their projects and are looking forward to submitting 1985-86 follow-up project proposals and/or initiating new projects. Plans are to more closely link school developed improvement goals to faculty proposals during the next funding cycle while continuing those projects which are most successful during the current quarter. The provision of some service projects of marginal research value appears to be necessary to establish credibility and acceptance in the field. However, no project was rejected by the school because it was purely research. Those projects which were unacceptable were one which required extensive teacher time to implement an instructional approach the teachers felt was already being used to the degree feasible and one which the superintendents felt might jeopardize relationships within their school systems.

IX. Field Experiences in Rural Schools

One goal of the Rural Education Project is to provide pre-service teacher education field experiences in rural schools. During the 1984-85 school year, a major portion of the student teachers were placed in the member schools. Each school except YAI had student teachers for at least two of the three quarters. The total number placed in member schools was 12 during Fall, 25

during Winter, and 26 during Spring. In addition, at least five graduate students in the College of Education are completing field experience assignments in the member schools. Two of the faculty research/service projects involved major school based expereinces for students in the Department of Music and Art.

X. Other Developments

Rural education is a contemporary national movement. Several other states and/or universities are establishing centers for rural education support and/or research. At this time, it appears that the research/service thrust of our project is unique. On March 29, two TTU faculty members attended an organizational meeting for a Southern Rural Education Society. A meeting of directors of rural education projects is being planned for this summer in Denver. The TTU Director of Rural Education plans to attend.

The TTU Office of News Services has done an excellent job of disseminating information about the Rural Education Projects. Each article appearing in the national press brings inquiries about the project and assists in identifying persons who can be important resource persons. A list of these persons and agencies will be compiled and shared with News Services.

The Tennessee Association of Middle Schools has voted to devote a forthcoming issue of its journal to rural education. A national call for papers will go out in May. TTU faculty conducting research/service projects now are being encouraged to submit manuscripts for the journal issue.

The Governance Board has requested that a newsletter be developed for use by their school systems. Such a newsletter

would have utility thoughout the region, state and nation. An attempt will be made at this when time and funding permit. A newsletter could be the forerunner of a scholarly rural studies journal to be produced at TTU.

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